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ABSTRACT

This document describes 12 literacy programs operated in Houston under the auspices of the Houston READ commission, which is funded by corporate, foundation, and federal sources and serves disadvantaged adults with minimal literacy skills. For each program the sponsors and purpose are described, as well as program and student progress made, and points of pride. Bar graphs and pie charts illustrate quantitative data. A map of the Houston area shows the locations of the programs. (CML)

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PROFILES

OF

NEIGHBORHOOD LEARNING CENTERS

DEMONSTRATION AND PILOT PROJECTS

operated by the Houston READ Commission
in cooperation with organizations and individuals
in the private, public and volunteer sectors

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The Houston READ Commission

Leading the Way to Literacy

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1989

Figure 1 presents the comparison of reading entry and exit levels. The upward shift in reading achievement after participation in the reading program is clearly illustrated.

Figure 1: Comparison of Frequency Distribution for Reading Entry and Exit Levels

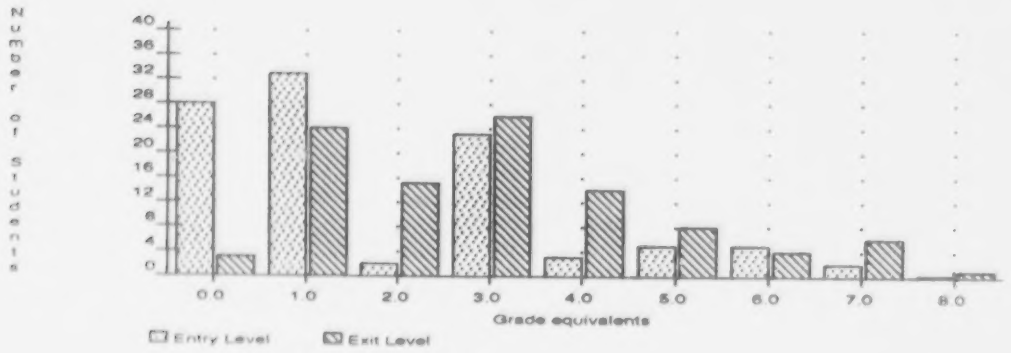
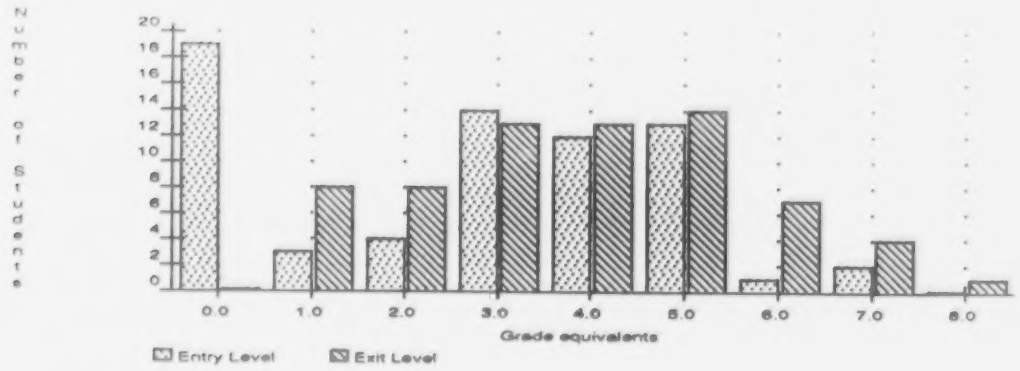


Figure 2 presents the comparison of math entry and exit levels. Again, the upward shift in math achievement after participation in the math program can be easily seen.

Figure 2: Comparison of Frequency Distribution for Math Entry and Exit Levels



"ASSESSMENT OF THE READ COMMISSION LEARNING CENTER"
Prepared by H. Jerome Frieberg, Professor of Education, University of Houston (September, 1989)

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WHAT IS THE HOUSTON READ COMMISSION?

-a broad-based coalition of community organizations working together to promote and expand adult and family literacy services in the greater Houston area

-a non-profit agency organized by the Mayor and City Council in January, 1988, to meet the needs of over 500,000 adults who lack the basic skills to get and keep jobs, participate fully in society, help their children succeed in school, and function effectively in today's world.

-the hub of a citywide information and referral network linking students and volunteers with local literacy programs

-an umbrella agency supporting the efforts of local service providers with grants and technical assistance

WHAT DOES THE COMMISSION DO?

-develops and operates pilot programs tailored to the needs of the hardest-to-serve individuals: disadvantaged adults with minimal literacy skills

-initiates collaborative programs to make free literacy services accessible to adults and families in inner-city neighborhoods, homeless shelters and at the workplace

-sponsors the Community Literacy Corps, uniting all individuals and organizations involved in the local literacy effort

-provides free training and tutoring materials to volunteers and students

-forges public/private sector partnerships to sponsor literacy programs and public awareness activities

-tracks the progress of literacy program participants to measure effectiveness of services

-maintains a central database on literacy services to identify neighborhoods and groups in need of programs

-helps corporations, congregations, civic groups and public agencies develop literacy programs tailored to the needs of their constituents

-raises the resources needed to support and coordinate literacy services in the Houston area

WHAT MAKES THE COMMISSION UNIQUE?

The scope of its activities: It is the only urban literacy coordinating agency in the country simultaneously operating pilot programs, training tutors, offering free tutoring materials, providing grants to providers, operating a central information and referral service, conducting literacy awareness campaigns and raising resources to support these activities.

The source of its support: The Commission is not funded by city or state government; it relies on a broad base of support from corporate, foundation and federal sources.

The philosophy of its programs: It is a pioneer in the concept of learner-centered instruction. Students are the focal point of the learning environment, centrally involved in planning and operating their programs, taking responsibility for their learning.

The innovative, multi-sector character of its partnerships: It brings together diverse groups from the public, private and volunteer sectors in innovative partnerships designed to meet shared goals.

The Community Literacy Corps

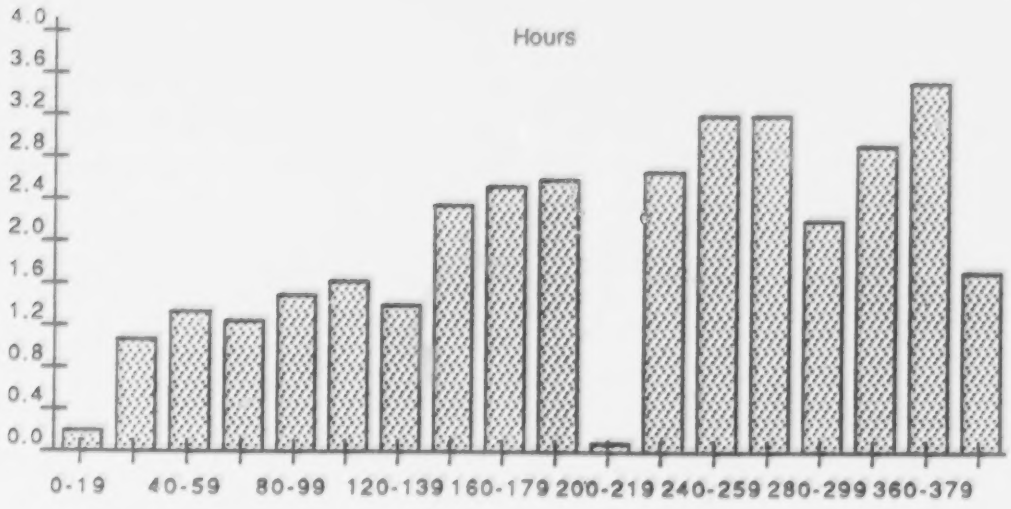
Project:	The Community Literacy Corps, a citywide tutor-training initiative organized by the Commission and offered at a variety of locations.
Partners:	Conoco, First Interstate Bank and the Houston Chronicle provide funding. Aramco Services Company provides a training facility and support for the project.
Other Partners:	Local service providers refer candidates for the Commission's cadre of tutor-trainers.
Purpose:	To supplement the tutor-training capacity of local literacy organizations in order to place trained volunteer tutors in literacy programs at the pace required to meet the needs of the community. Training is offered in each of the methods used by local groups as well as in an eclectic method developed by the Commission.
Progress:	Tutor-training capacity has more than doubled since the inception of this project in September 1989. Bi-weekly orientations are offered for prospective volunteers. Each trainee tutors in a supervised setting prior to certification.
Points of Pride:	The Commission offers free tutoring materials to participants. The eclectic method is modular in design so training may be tailored to the needs of family, workplace or computer-assisted programs. In addition to regularly scheduled training at neighborhood learning centers, training is available at sites designated by organizations requesting service.

Volunteer Tutor Training

Tutor Training -	12	Hours Basic Skills
	12	Hours English as a Second Language
October 1989	32	Workshops completed
through April 1990	485	Volunteers trained
	10	Trainers certified

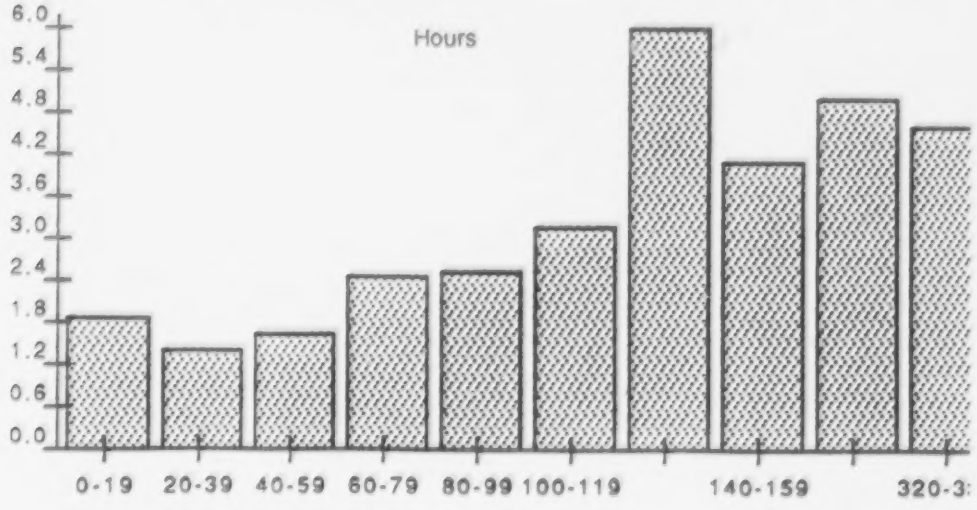
READ Commission Learning Center

Reading Gains by Number of Hours
October '89 through April '90



Average Gain

Math Gains by Number of Hours - October '89 through April '90



Average Gain

Reading is assessed using a variety of instruments including: Test of Adult Basic Education, Comprehensive Competencies Program level gains, Computer Curriculum Corporation level gains, and unit checkups. Math is assessed with the Enright Math Assessment.

Read Commission Learning Center

Project: READ Commission Learning Center, located at 3518 Polk (at Scott) in the Latino Learning Center, a community center east of downtown. This center, the first operated by the Commission, opened in September, 1988.

Purpose: To meet the needs of adult learners by demonstrating the effectiveness of integrating a wide variety of instructional materials, media and approaches in a comprehensive learner-centered curriculum.

Primary Partners: University of Houston, Literacy Advance of Houston, Houston Job Training Partnership Council (HJTPC).

Other Partners:

- United Parcel Service/U.S. Basics pilot site for Comprehensive Competencies Program English as a Second Language Lab.
- Computer Lab donated by Compaq Computer Corporation.
- Demonstration site for HJTPC Computer Curriculum Corporation Lab.
- Immigration and Naturalization Service site for amnesty program.
- Summer academic enrichment program provided for children of adults enrolled in the program.
- Vision screening, fittings and free glasses provided by Today's Vision through the Harris County Optometric Society.
- Student Assistance fund established by the George Foundation.
- Volunteer, in-kind and direct support by Southwestern Bell.
- Technical assistance provided by Texas BASICs.
- Junior League volunteers assist in the tutoring program.
- The Ralph A. Johnston Foundation, Women's American ORT, Chevron and Houston Metro Ford dealers support the library.

Participants: Adults and out of school youth entering below the 7th grade reading/math level who meet income eligibility guidelines of federal Job Training Partnership Act.

Progress: In the first two years of this project 216 students have been served.

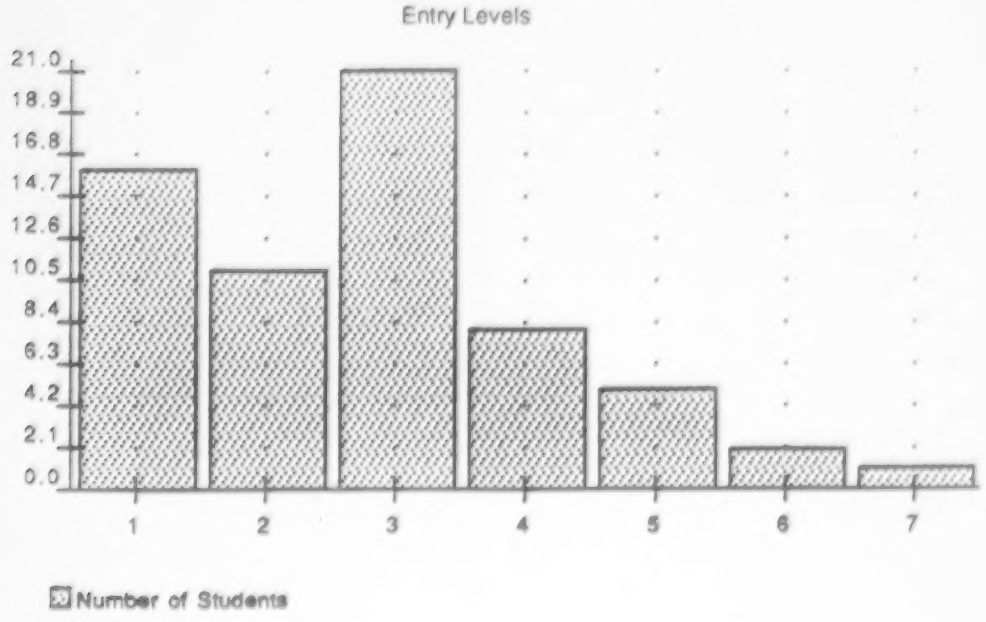
Of these:

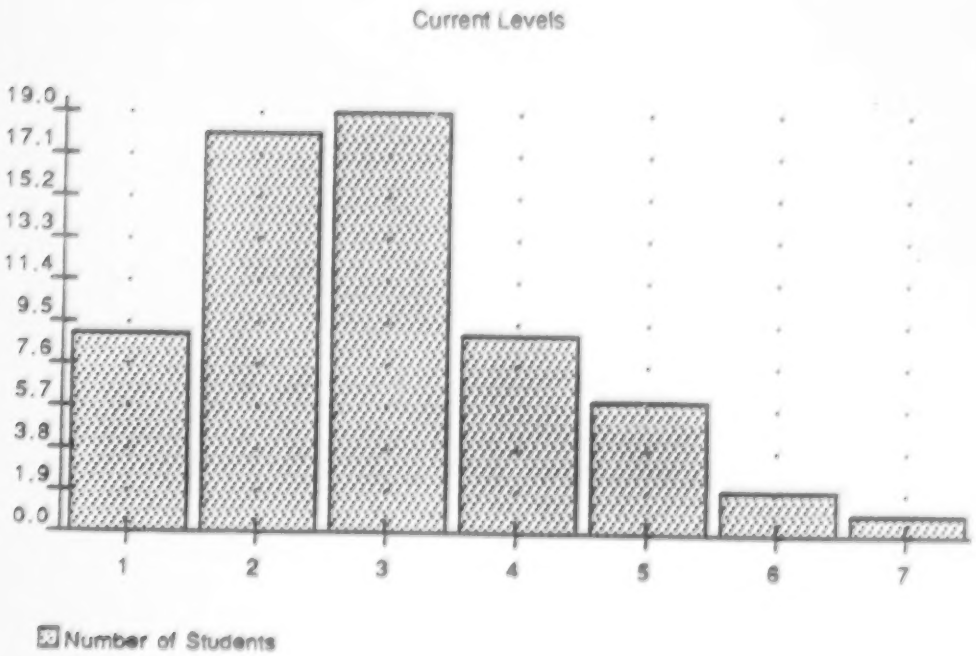
157	are still active in the program.
6	graduated to further training
19	gained employment
8	completed the program with grade gains
7	relocated
10	took medical or pregnancy leave

Only 9 dropped out: a 4% dropout rate

Average grade gains: 1 grade in reading, 1 in math in 67 hours of instruction.

Points of Pride: 100 students and entire staff were carried over from first program year to the second. Students participate in program planning through an active student council.





These gains are calculated from the entry level of each student and their current assessed levels.

Reading is assessed using a variety of instruments including: Test of Adult Basic Education, Comprehensive Competencies Program level gains, Computer Curriculum Corporation level gains, unit checkups and the Enright Math Assessment.

READ Commission Learning Center at Palm Center

Project: READ Commission Learning Center located at 5400 Griggs Road (southeast quadrant) in Palm Center, an urban renewal project in an inner-city neighborhood housing a small business incubator for minority-owned enterprises.

Purpose: To help individuals 1) make the transition from a literacy program to meaningful employment through a comprehensive literacy and job training program, and 2) contribute to the academic success of children through an intergenerational literacy program.

Partners:

- Site is provided by City of Houston Planning and Development Department through Community Development block grant funds. "Partners for Progress - The Learning Enterprise" is a joint project with SER-Jobs for Progress funded by the Houston Job Training Partnership Council.
- The Family Learning Program is funded by the Enron Foundation, Houston Light and Power, Tenneco, Inc. and the Brown Foundation.

Other Partners:

- The Houston Public Library offers a parent-child reading program.
- Assault on Illiteracy Program-Houston and Houston Educational Association for Reading and Training provide volunteer tutors.

Participants: Adults and out-of-school youth at or below the7th grade reading/math level who meet federal eligibility guidelines. Children (pre-school through adolescent) and their parents.

Progress: Opened in November, 1989. Staff were cross-trained in a variety of instructional methods. 40 students enrolled by January.

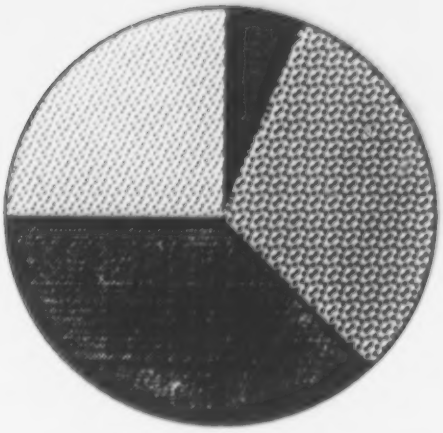
Points of Pride:

- One of the first programs in the country offering an integrated literacy/job training program and family learning center.
- Literacy students preparing for employment are placed in part-time jobs so that they can stay in the program long enough to enter and succeed in job training.
- A learner-centered, self-paced and self-directed curriculum.
- Counseling and support services are provided.
- Computer-assisted, small group and individualized instruction.
- Community exploration and worksite externships.
- A computer-assisted lab for learning disabled students is being piloted with adult literacy students.
- Staff trained at the Kenan Trust Family Literacy Program, a national model, help under-educated parents and family members participate in the academic success of their children while improving their own literacy and employability.
- A pilot site for the Commission's Building the Bridge to the School curriculum.
- Two emerging minority community literacy organizations will have free office tutoring and workshop space.

Whataburger Learning Center

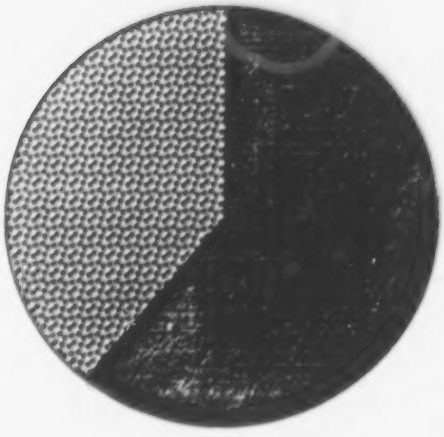
Level Gains and Demographics

Ethnic Groups



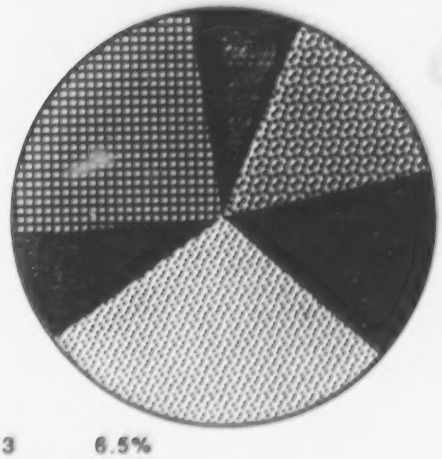
Asian	6.3%
Black	31.3%
Hispanic	37.5%
Caucasian	25.0%

Gender



Male	60.9%
Female	39.1%

Last Grade Completed



1-3	6.5%
4-6	15.2%
7-8	15.2%
9-10	28.3%
11th	8.7%
H.S.	23.9%
Other	2.2%

This data is summarized from all assessments on record for March 1990

Whataburger Learning Center

Project: Whataburger Learning Center is located at 4001 N. Shepherd (north central quadrant) in a two story elevator building in the Garden Oaks area.

Purpose: To provide a tutoring center for adult literacy students and volunteer tutors with the resources needed (trained staff, instructional and reference materials, equipment and furnishings, and coordination of activities) to help learners and volunteers succeed. The center is also used for regularly scheduled assessment of students and orientation and training of volunteers.

Primary Partners: HOUWHATCO (Houston Whataburger restaurant owners) and Whataburger, Inc. provide all site related expenses and release time for employees to participate as students and volunteers.

Other Partners:

- VISTA volunteers funded by the federal ACTION agency coordinate activities at the center.
- Compaq Computer Corporation donated computers for a computer-assisted learning lab.
- Some instructional materials are obtained from the Houston Community College System through a grant from the Texas Education Agency.
- A Junior League volunteer serves as a tutor and learning center aide.

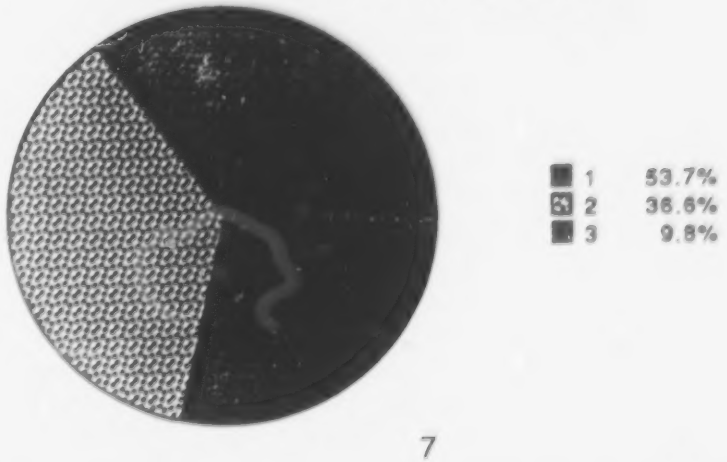
Participants: Open to adults and out-of-school youth. Students are referred by the READ Commission Literacy "Helpline". Drop-ins are welcome. Capacity: 200 learners per week. Whataburger employees volunteer to participate as students or volunteers. Many of the students are employed blue collar workers.

Progress: Since moving to a new location in May, 1989 the center has grown to regularly serve 189 students, several of whom have completed 100-400 hours of instruction.

Whataburger, Inc. offers incentives to participants who complete 15 hours of instruction. (Free hamburger coupons)

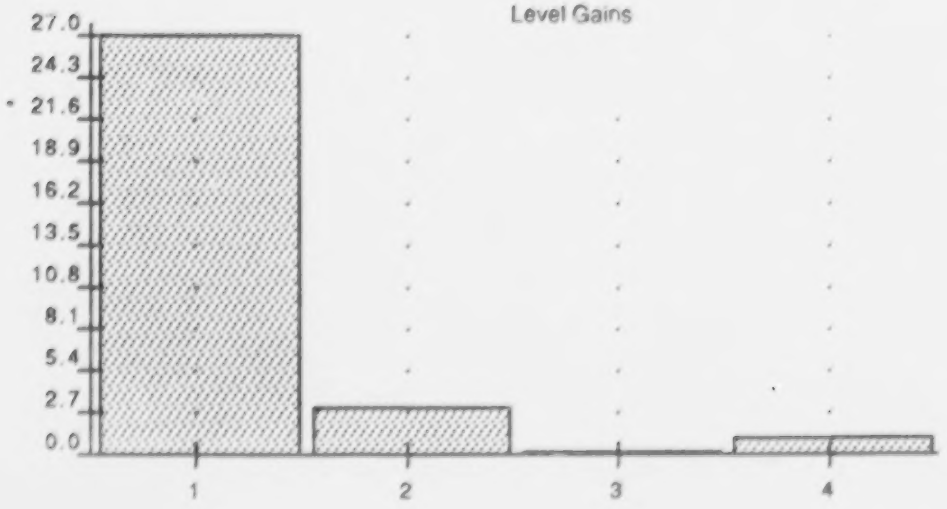
Points of Pride: The success of this partnership project led by Whataburger, Inc. established a learning center for the local community linking workplace literacy with community education.

Level Gains - March 1990



Bayland Learning Center

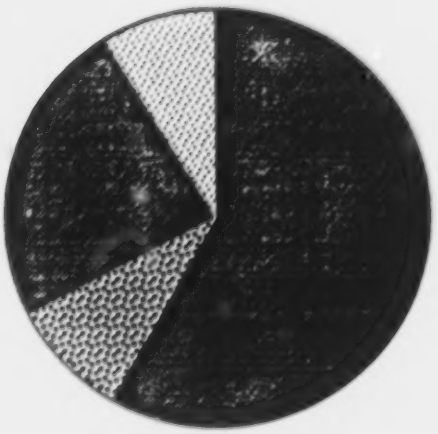
Level Gains



These gains are calculated from the entry level of the student and their current assessed level.

Reading is assessed using a variety of instruments including: Test of Adult Basic Education, Comprehensive Competencies Program level gains, Computer Curriculum Corporation level gains, and Laubach skills checkups. Math is assessed with the Enright Math Assessment.

Ethnic Groups



Bayland Learning Center

Project: Bayland Learning Center, 6400 Bissonnet near Hillcroft (southwest quadrant) in the Bayland Park Community Center, a multi-service center used primarily by senior citizens.

Partners: Harris County Precinct 3 provides the site, supplies, support services and assistance in scheduling, coordination, and community outreach.

Other Partners:
- VISTA volunteers funded by the federal ACTION agency help coordinate activities and conduct outreach, assessment and orientation of students and volunteers.
- Computer Lab donated by Compaq Computer Corporation.

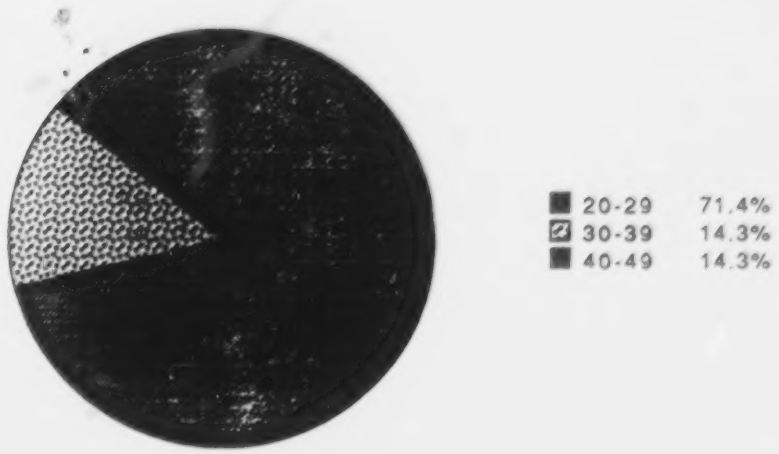
Purpose: To provide a tutoring center at a county-operated multi-service center for adult literacy students and volunteer tutors with the resources needed (trained staff, instructional and reference materials, equipment and furnishings, and coordination of activities) to help learners and volunteers succeed. The model can be replicated in other community centers.

Participants: Capacity: 200 learners per week.

Progress: After only a few months of operation, the program outgrew its initial space and moved to a larger, self-contained facility adjacent to the main building. Hours of operation were also expanded to meet the demand for services.

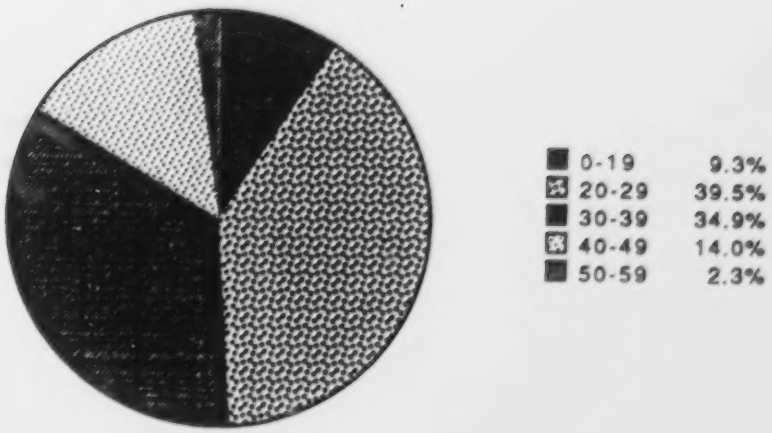
Points of Pride: This is the first literacy program to be offered at a Harris County Community Center.

Age of Students



Transitional Living Center

Age of Students



April '90

	Students	Tutors	Volunteers	Contact hours per Month
Transitional Living Center Family Literacy Program	105	3	11	941

Transitional Living Center

Project: The Transitional Living Center Family Learning Center is located at 5013 Calhoun in a Star of Hope facility providing apartments and support services to homeless families for up to 18 months.

Partners: The Star of Hope Transitional Living Center provides the site.

Other Partners:

- Houston Community College System provides partial funding of the adult literacy program through the Stewart McKinney Act which authorizes the use of federal adult education act funds for literacy services for the homeless.
- The Greater Houston Area Reading Council has adopted the program, offering the support of professional reading teachers to ensure the success of this family learning center.

Purpose: To provide literacy instruction and academic enrichment to parents and their children while they are in transition from homeless shelters to permanent housing. This program is replicable at similar transitional centers which represent a trend in effective assistance to the homeless. The curriculum stresses employability skills, structured involvement by the parents in their children's literacy and academic development, and support for the children in school readiness and school success.

Progress: The director of the center considers the family literacy program so worthwhile that residents are now required to attend.

Points of Pride: The program features a unique "Bridge to the School" curriculum developed by the Commission to help parents interact with the teachers and staff at their children's school. Program staff have helped arrange transfers to magnet school programs so that the children will not have to change schools when they move to independent housing. The program received the Star of Hope annual award for "Outstanding Project of the Year."

DeZavala/READ Commission Learning Center

Project: DeZavala/READ Commission Learning Center is located at 7521 Ave H in an elementary school in the Magnolia neighborhood southeast of downtown. Open after school and in the evening, twice a week.

Partners: Citicorp provides funding for a coordinator and instructional materials. The school principal assisted in planning the project and arranged to have the classrooms available in the evening. Some of the teachers serve as volunteer tutors.

Other Partners:

- An intensive outreach and volunteer recruitment campaign was assisted by Hispanic civic groups. High school students serve as volunteers in the children's academic enrichment program.

Purpose: To help parents of children at this elementary school who want to help their children succeed in school and improve their own skills by learning to speak English and acquiring basic skills.

Participants: Limited English-speaking adults and their elementary school children.

Progress: The program was filled to capacity as soon as it opened (October, 1989). The scope of this pilot program was expanded in the first week to meet the outpouring of demand for services. By December, each group of adult students presented a skit, song, or reading in English at a holiday celebration with their children. In May, all of the students signed up to continue in the program during the summer.

Points of Pride: This program brings literacy services to parents in the comfortable surroundings of their children's neighborhood elementary school. Many of the participants have lived in Texas all their lives and are learning English for the first time.

April '90

		Students	Tutors	Volunteers	Contact Hours per Month
DeZavala/READ Learning Center Family Literacy Program	Adults	86	3	14	1112
	Children	42			

Aramco Learning Center

Project: Aramco Learning Center is located at 9009 W. Loop South across from Meyerland Plaza Shopping Center (southwestquadrant) in the Aramco Services Company building. Open to the public after working hours and on Saturday.

Purpose: To provide a tutoring center for adult literacy students, offer English as a Second Language instruction to meet the needs of the community, and provide students and volunteers with resources needed (trained staff, instructional and reference materials, ESL visual aids, equipment and furnishings).

Primary Partners: Aramco Services Company provides the site, copying facilities, staff office, and training facilities.

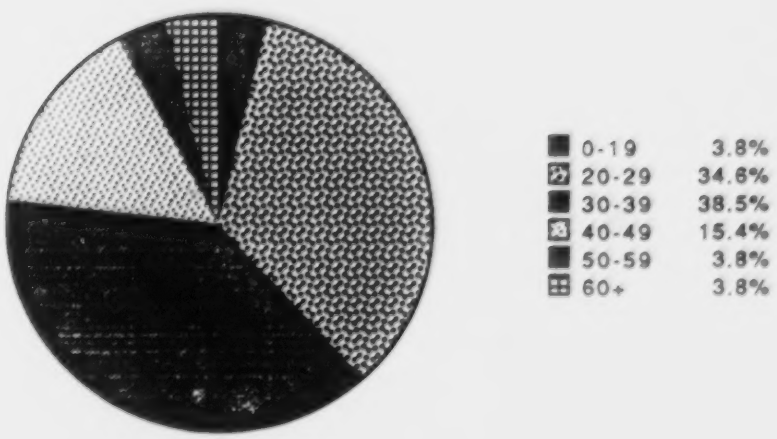
Other Partners:
- Computer lab donated by Compaq Computer Corporation.

Participants: Aramco employees volunteer after working hours.
Bellaire High School students volunteer as tutors in the center.

Progress: Over 80 students meet regularly. One family of eleven has all family members enrolled.

Points of Pride: The first center to have high school students serving as volunteer tutors.

Age of Students



Compass

Project:	Compass is located at 1225 Texas Avenue in downtown Houston at a private, non-profit Job Assistance Program for homeless adults.
Primary Partners:	Compass provides the site and support services plus assistance in scheduling, coordination, and community outreach.
Other Partners:	• The Houston Community College System provides partial funding of the literacy program through the Stewart McKinney Act which authorizes the use of federal adult education act funds for literacy services for the homeless. • The Holy Trinity Lutheran Church provides bus tokens and some support services. • VISTA volunteers coordinated the program during the initial year.
Purpose:	To help homeless adults improve literacy skills in order to obtain jobs and become self-sufficient.
Participants:	Hard-core unemployed adults with multiple barriers to employment.
Progress:	Participants develop improved self-esteem and motivation. Center personnel report positive changes in appearance and attitude.
Points of Pride:	These difficult-to-serve individuals do not seek out literacy programs and have not been served by traditional volunteer literacy organizations. The Commission brings literacy services to the adults using this job placement program, offering a valuable service tailored to the needs of the clients.

Project Smart

Project:	Project Smart: Adventures in Excellence, located at 5717 Neches, is in the northeast area of Houston at 5 workplace tutoring sites.
Purpose:	To improve the basic skills of employees and to provide workplace advancement opportunities.
Primary Partners:	Houston READ Commission, City of Houston and Assault on Illiteracy Program - Houston Division
Participants:	City of Houston employees
Progress:	Opened in November, 1989, it has expanded from one site to five with over 60 students enrolled in the first 3 months.
Points of Pride:	The first workplace literacy program provided by the Commission in partnership with a department of the City. Incentives such as restaurant coupons and auto part discounts are offered to students and tutors who participate in the program.

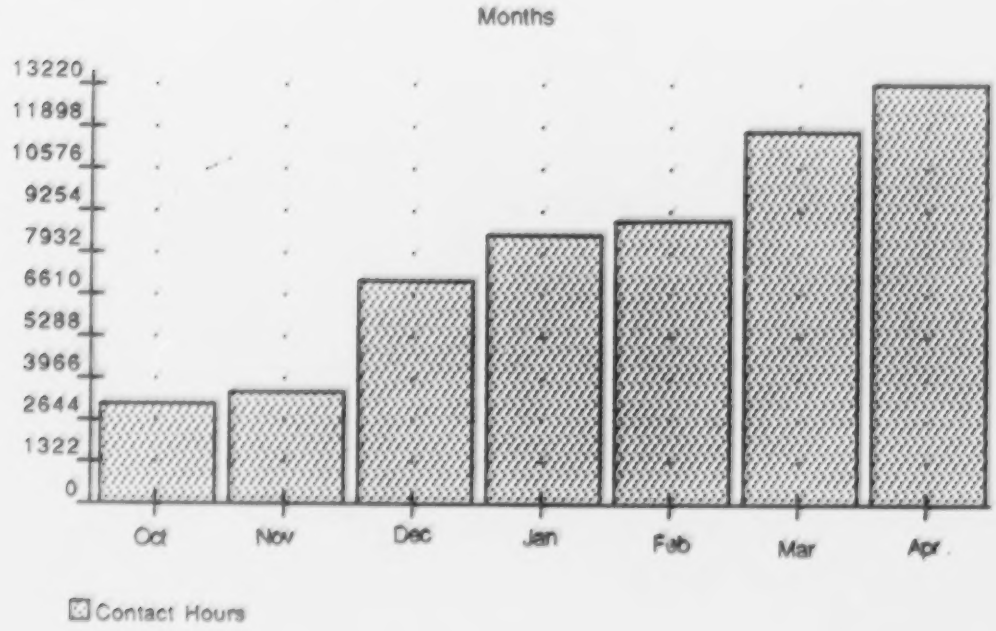
Rotary Learning Center

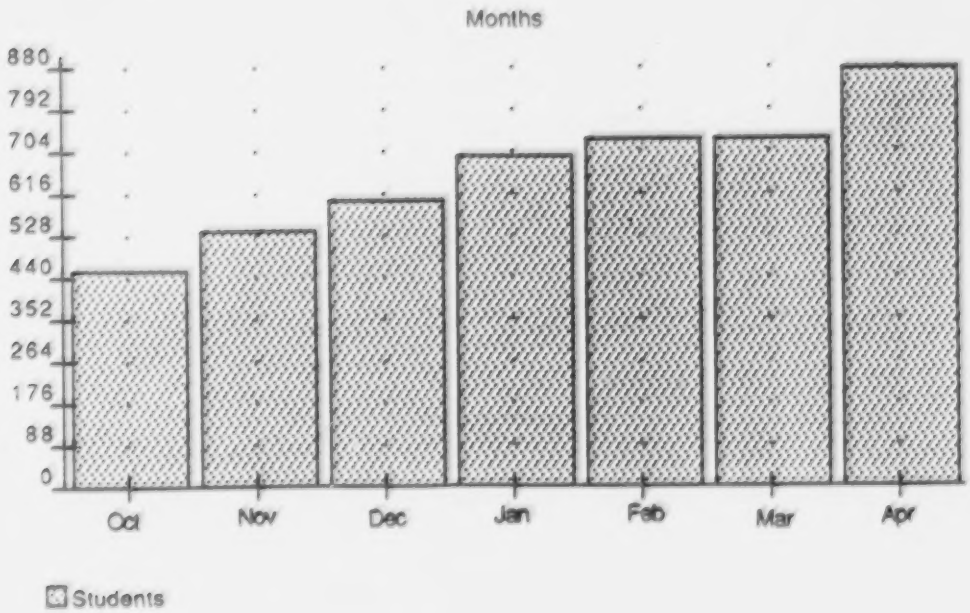
Project:	District 589 Rotary Learning Center is located at 9725 Louedd (northwest quadrant) in the Willowbrook Mall area.
Purpose:	To provide a community based adult literacy program in the FM 1960 area offering basic reading, writing, math and functional life skills instruction.
Primary Partners:	Houston READ Commission/Willowbrook Rotary Club.
Other Partners:	• Dr. William (Bill) Moyer provides free vision screening for students. • Lakewood Methodist Church provides volunteers for the program.
Participants:	Capacity is not limited, center has additional growth sites available.
Progress:	Volunteer support group meetings are held weekly. On-site Materials Resource Library.
Points of Pride:	A pilot project to develop a model for other Rotary Clubs and service organizations. The Commission's first partnership project with Houston area Rotary Clubs.

Literacy Education Assistance Program at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital

Project:	Literacy Education Assistance Program (LEAP) - St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital.
Purpose:	To provide basic reading, writing, and math instruction to employees to help them meet work-related and personal goals.
Primary Partners:	St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital
Other Partners:	• Community Literacy Corps volunteers.
Participants:	Hospital employees are tutored by employee volunteers and volunteers referred by The Literacy Helpline.
Progress:	Opened April, 1990. Two on-site locations. Project initially set-up for ten weeks. Due to the progress and interest of the students, program has been renewed for another ten weeks. Enrollment includes students from Environmental Service, Food Service, and Microfilm/Records; curriculum has been tailored to serve this workforce.
Points of Pride:	St. Luke's is providing release time for employees to participate as volunteers or students on company time. The program is sponsored solely by St. Luke's.

Graphs to show the increase in students and contact hours during the period from October '89 through April '90 for all READ Commission Programs





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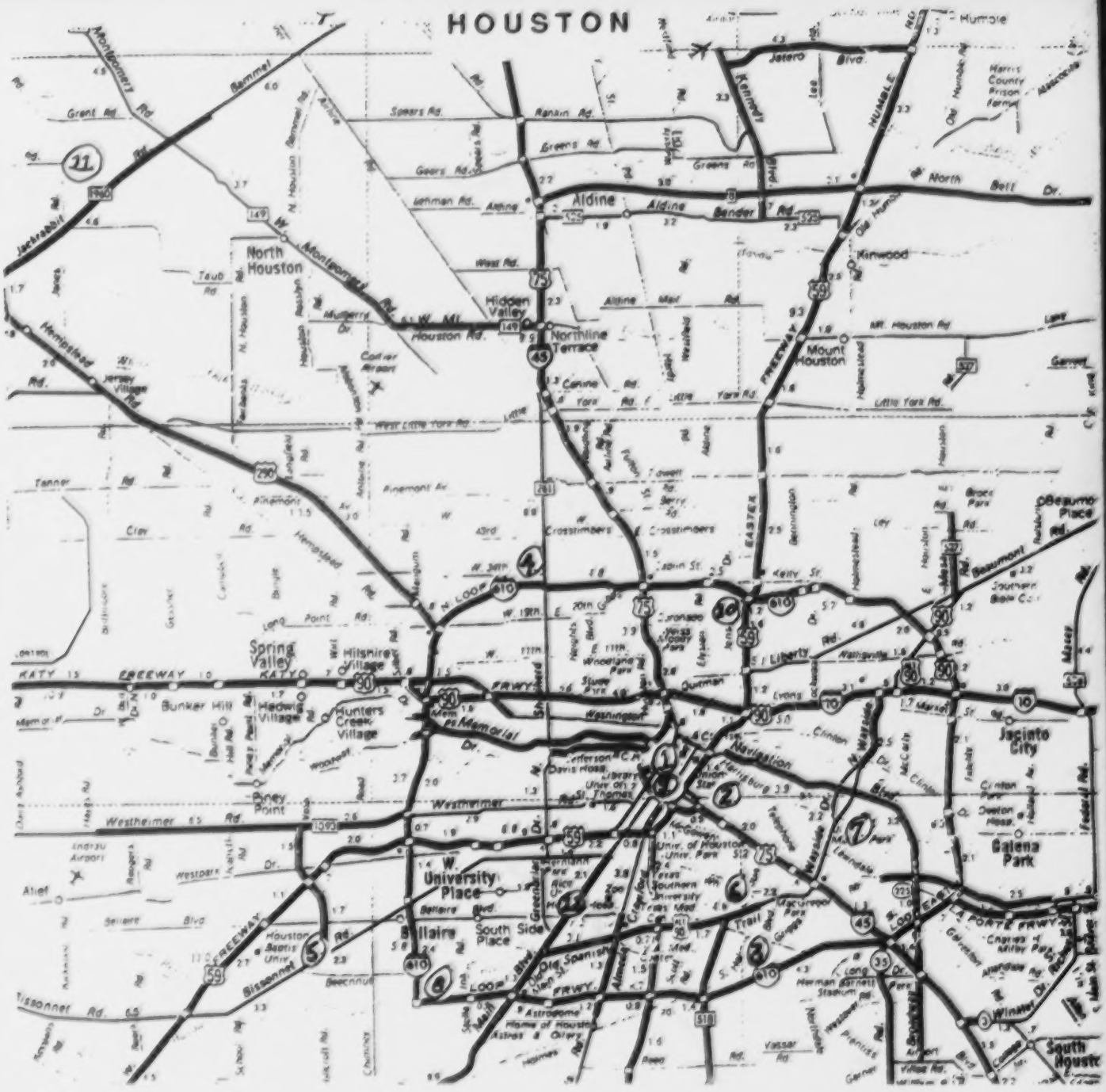

Learning Centers' Location

1. The Community Literacy Corps - coordinated by the Houston READ Commission
2. READ Commission Learning Center,- 3518 Polk at Scott (east of downtown)
3. READ Commission Learning Center - 5400 Griggs Road - Palm Center (southeast quadrant)
4. Whataburger Learning Center - 4001 N. Shepherd (north central quadrant)
5. Bayland Learning Center, 6400 Bissonnet near Hillcroft (southwest quadrant)
6. Transitional Living Center Family Learning Center - 5013 Calhoun
7. DeZavala/READ Commission Learning Center - 7521 Ave H (southeast of downtown)
8. Aramco Learning Center - 9009 W. Loop South - Meyerland Plaza (southwest quadrant)
9. Compass - 1225 Texas Avenue (downtown)
10. Project Smart - 5717 Neches (northeast)
11. Rotary Learning Center - 9725 Louedd (northwest quadrant)
12. Literacy Education Assistance Program - St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital (Medical Center)